

Revamping Of U. S. I. A. Under Study

Report Cites Gaps, Calls for Expansion

WASHINGTON, Jan. 23 (UPI)—The United States Information Agency under President Kennedy may face a top to bottom shakeup.

Whether this occurs will become evident in the weeks ahead. But throughout his election campaign the new Chief Executive hammered at the "low state" of American prestige abroad under the Eisenhower regime.

The U. S. I. A. is one of the government's chief media for selling the American freedom story to nations being wooed with Communist blandishments. Hence, Mr. Kennedy can be expected to screen its operations, searching out ways to make it a more effective propaganda instrument.

Still to be settled is who will head the agency, currently directed by Abbott Washburn, who replaced Eisenhower appointee George V. Allen.

Special Study

The status of the U. S. I. A. program—its achievements and omissions—was underlined recently in a report by former President Eisenhower's special nine-man committee to evaluate our information activities abroad.

The committee was headed by Mansfield D. Sprague, former Assistant Secretary of Defense, and included among its members Allen W. Dulles, Director of the Central Intelligence Agency, and Livingston T. Merchant, Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs. The last two will continue to serve under Mr. Kennedy and could brief him on U. S. I. A.'s shortcomings.

The Sprague report was eleven months in preparation. Some of it was kept secret for security purposes and to avoid offending some nations. But it called for a bold surge forward in projecting the American image overseas, with urgent attention for Asia, Africa and Latin America. These currently are Moscow's main propaganda targets.

The committee admitted there were huge gaps in United States propaganda activities. It also called the Soviet Sputnik space triumph a psychological victory which profoundly improved Russia's image and gave it a tremendous propaganda advantage.

"The scale of the United States information effort," the committee said, "will have to be progressively expanded for some time to come. Today it is recognized that unless governments effectively communicate their policies and actions to all politically influential elements of foreign populations, their programs can be impeded and their security placed in jeopardy."

One of Kennedy's hardest jobs, however, will be to sell Congress on a costly expansion of the agency. Republicans and Democrats alike are skeptical about the worth of the program.

But Mr. Kennedy might win Republican support by exploiting the fact that the Sprague group whose views match his thinking was a product of the Eisenhower administration. He also may win bi-partisan support by pledging to make U. S. I. A. worth every dollar spent on it.